
Niccolò Manassero. *A banchetto con gli eroi. La mobilia in avorio dalla Casa Quadrata a Nisa Partica*

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Niccolò Manassero. *A banchetto con gli eroi. La mobilia in avorio dalla Casa Quadrata a Nisa Partica con contributi di Giorgio Affanni e Carlo Lippolis*. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2018, 211 p. ("Mnène" Documenti, culture, storia del Mediterraneo e dell'Oriente Antico 10)

- 1 Niccolò Manassero's book is a most welcome study of the ivory fragments of furniture discovered by the Soviet YuTake ("South Turkmenistan Complex Archaeological Expedition") during the 1948 excavation of the Square House of Parthian Old Nisa (ended in 1963). This slim but dense monograph perfectly integrates the latest study on the notorious ivory *rhyta* coming from the same context (E. Pappalardo. *Nisa parthica. I rhyta ellenistici*. Firenze, Le Lettere, 2010; see also the original publication by M. E. Masson and G. A. Pugachenkova. *Parfyanskije ritony Nisy*. Tr. YuTAKÉ IV. Moscow, 1959 – a volume translated from Russian to English in 1982 as *The Parthian rhytons of Nisa. Monografie di Mesopotamia 1*. Florence, Le Lettere). It also updates, and considerably revises, the seminal albeit now superseded work of G. A. Pugachenkova (1915-2007) on the same subject (e.g., see her 1969 "*Tron Mitridata I iz parfyanskoj Nisy*"). The book opens with an introduction by C. Lippolis on the context of the finds. This first chapter introduces to the core of the volume, that is, Manassero's catalogue raisonné of all the ivory fragments of furniture pieces that he and his collaborators had the opportunity to directly examine in the National Museum of Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, in 2013. Manassero's thorough scrutiny not only includes a description of the pieces, with the addition of important typological remarks, but it also considers the morphological aspects of each specimen and the current state of preservation of each. Chapter 3,

authored by Giorgio Affanni, is a digression on ivory as a raw material, the study protocol employed during the work at the museum, and, finally, an estimate of the number of elephant tusks used in the manufacture of the furniture examined. Manassero then moves forward with his analysis. Sustained by the hard data collected, in Chapter 4 he advances new hypotheses regarding the quantity and the quality of the ivory furniture of Parthian Nisa, comparing the material with other pertinent evidence from different ancient contexts. He dedicates a final chapter to his conclusive remarks. This final Chapter 5 is mostly devoted to a reassessment of the ivory material from Nisa, including also the *rhyta*, a subject and a typology that the author knows well (N. Manassero, *Rhyta e corni potori dall'Età del Ferro all'epoca sasanide*. Oxford, BAR, 2008). He first considers it within its specific archaeological context, that is the Square House of Arsacid Nisa in its second stage (*terminus ante quem* toward the end of the 1st century AD), and then he discusses the original setting and use of these valuable items, pondered in light of their connections with the Arsacid kingship and religion.

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